

VZCZCXRO1409

PP RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM RUEHNH RUEHTRO
DE RUEHGO #0758 2690852
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 250852Z SEP 08 ZDK
FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8209
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1545
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 5032
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 8627
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 6196
RHMMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 4052
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2017
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 000758

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP, IO, AND DS/IP/EAP; PACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/24/2018

TAGS: PGOV PREL PHUM BM ASEC CASC

SUBJECT: BOMB BLAST CONFIRMED IN DOWNTOWN RANGOON

REF: RANGOON 744

Classified By: Pol Officer Sean O'Neill for Reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. A bomb exploded at a bus station in downtown Rangoon the morning of September 25. Reports of casualties vary, some indicating as many as two deaths and seven injuries. Post disseminated an internal message and a consular warden message about the bombing. We have received no reports that any Amcits were affected. The regime has not yet publicly released any information about the bombing, and no one has claimed responsibility. In the past, the government has blamed insurgents and opposition activists for similar bombings, although the regime has never presented any credible evidence to back up these accusations. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Multiple sources confirm that a bomb exploded at a bus station near city hall in downtown Rangoon the morning of September 25. Reports of casualties vary. Police Special Branch (SB) told RSO at least one person was killed and eight were injured. The Australian DCM told us "reliable sources" reported three injuries, but no deaths. AP, AFP, and Reuters news services reported between three and seven minor injuries. ARSO observed security personnel cordoning off the area and Rangoon city street sweepers removing debris from the scene approximately one hour after the blast. Other than the information provided by SB to RSO, the government has not released any information regarding the bombing, including on victims, suspects, or possible motives.

¶3. (SBU) Post disseminated an internal message cautioning all Embassy employees to avoid the downtown area. Post also sent out a consular warden message alerting the American community to the bombing and cautioning Amcits to avoid the downtown area for at least the remainder of the day. This follows a September 23 warden message advising Amcits to exercise vigilance and avoid large gatherings in light of the pending anniversary of the government's crackdown on last September's monk-led protests. The consular section has received no reports of any Americans injured or otherwise involved in today's bombing.

¶4. (SBU) In the past, the government has blamed insurgents and opposition activists for similar bombings, although the regime has never presented any credible evidence to back up these accusations. Some of our contacts have speculated the regime conducts these bombings in order to justify heightened

security. So far, we have seen no hard evidence to support either theory.

¶15. (SBU) In January 2008, the regime blamed the Karen National Union (KNU) for three bombings in Nay Pyi Taw (the new capitol), Bago, and Rangoon that the GOB claimed had killed two and injured five. The KNU, which acknowledges engaging in hostilities with the Burma Army in Karen State, immediately denied any involvement. On September 7, 2008, the regime publicly accused detained human rights activist Myint Aye of accepting money from our public affairs section, among others, for the purpose of committing "subversive acts," including a July 2008 bombing of the government-affiliated Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) office in Shwe Pyi Thar, Rangoon Division (reftel), but has yet to formally charge him. Earlier this month, on September 9, a small bomb reportedly detonated in the back of an unoccupied bus in Rangoon, slightly injuring three bystanders. The regime subsequently blamed "terrorists" without elaborating. Recent editions of the regime's mouthpiece New Light of Myanmar have warned that "insurgents" are planning to conduct bombings, but have not provided any specifics.

DINGER